

## **PRESS CLUB 13 NOVEMBER 2003**

Good morning ladies and gentleman It's been a while since we have been together I am happy to report that things are progressing well in MNB (E), there have not been any major things to discuss and this is a positive step.

I would like to discuss couple of good things that I've seen over the past several weeks, it seems we have a tendency to focus on the bad and do not spend time looking at the good and there are many areas that are very positive and deserve recognition.

One of these areas would be the transition of authority to KPS and UNMIK-p in my area of responsibility we have three police stations that were recently transferred to KPS, these stations are located to Shterpce, Kaçanik, and Gjilan. Stations like these are what help in controlling criminal activity in cities and villages and looking what KPS and UNMIK-p have provided you over the past four years we see that crime has greatly decreased. Assaults are down by 38%, threats and intimidation crimes are down by 13 %, bombings are down by 79%, and murders are down by 20%. In addition to that, most murders are linked to family disputes or criminal activity; they are not linked to inter ethnic crime. In fact over the past six months inter ethnic crime is less than 1% of all crimes where intra ethnic crime is at 99%. US soldiers and all soldiers in our sector, fully support the activities of KPS and UNMIK-p. We are proud of the efforts that we are seeing in our sector by these two organizations and we will continue to work with them and support them in the efforts to maintain the safe and secure environment in MNB (E). In fact on next Wednesday I have invited the recent graduates of the KPS training academy who are now assigned to the Gjilan region to come to camp Bondsteel for dinner, we will discuss the working relationship between KPS and soldiers in MNB (E) I wanted to mention that those percentages are the decrease comparing to last years.

I comment KPS and UNMIK -p and their progress over last four years and we will continue our working relationship. I just want to add two recent successes that you may have noticed, UNMIK - p was very quick in making an arrest when a 56 year old Albanian man shot a 75 year old Serbian woman in Gjilan, this was a dispute over property in which the woman had done all the right things in the courts, the woman was hospitalized for several weeks and seemed to be doing well unfortunately last week the woman died. The man is now being charged with murder, and in another incident just yesterday KPS arrested two suspects (Ilaz Ramadani and Zenel Zeneli – by the interpreter) for the trafficking of the heroin in Urosevac – Ferizaj. During the arrest 1490 gram of heroin and a digital scale were confiscated. These two situations are good example to show how UNMIK-p and KPS are doing their job and they should be congratulated for their efforts.

Recently our medical personnel at Bondsteel had a transfer of authority I would like to recognize the medical unit that has departed for their hard work and cooperation with the communities of MNB (E). They provided many MEDCAP's to the local population, assisting in the medical treatment and dental care and education, due to the cooperation between the commander and the Gjilan hospital a new helipad was constructed and last week officially dedicated. The medical Task Force has been a tremendous asset to our sector for both, the soldiers and the civilians.

Although we have a new group of medical personnel I assure you that the treatment and cooperation will continue. The MEDCAP's are becoming important part of the

humanitarian assistance that we can provide. In addition to the MEDCAP's and DENTCAP's that have been provided in the past we have some good news for the future. The new commander of the medical facilities is veterinarian, with his background and experience we are looking at the opportunity to provide VETCAP's as well, this will help the communities in receiving effective medical care for pets and animals. Not only with this help with health of the animals but also with health of the citizens as well. Finally I would like to discuss the clean water situation in Gjilan. The international community for Red Cross last week handed over its last water supply project in Balkans to the local water board. The project was to repair a 6.8 km pipeline running from Perlepnice reservoir to the city of Gjilan. ICRC built the reservoir, which can hold 1000 cubic meter of water, in 2001. The project repaired air valves, drains and improved overall water pressure along the pipeline. The pipeline reaches both, Albanian and Serb homes in Gjilan municipality and benefits a multiethnic location. This is yet another example of the positive situation that we are seeing in the MNB (E). I am proud that I am leading MNB (E) soldiers in Kosovo as the security situation improves every day. When I listen to my soldiers and see the progress that is being made I can honestly see a new phase of the development. The security situation is being transferred with permanent steps to the local and international police, we almost look at the situation today, it is not a same as it was four years ago. Kosovo is showing great progress and I would expect the progress to continue. I welcome your questions.

**Musli Berisha – Radio TEMA:**

Foreign press was writing last days that on camp Bondsteel are held some secret meeting between Kosovo leaders and highly American officials. What can you tell us about those meetings?

**Beck:**

It's not true. There were no such meeting out here in Bondsteel any time since I've been here any time that I know of.

**Demush Zefaj – Bota Sot:**

Mr. General, international community is demanding first the fulfillment of the standard then the definition of the status of Kosovo. Firstly is being required public security (safety), matter of fact that American KFOR cover quite of wide territory of Kosovo I think that has a responsibility about this standard, therefore I would like to ask you, how do you imagine this standard, how much will be fulfilled in the future in Kosovo until the year 2005.

**Beck:**

First of all the military is not into a business of policy making. My mission hasn't changed here, and I will keep pushing forward on a mission for a safe and secure, and to keep the transfer of authorities as they need to, to the civilian authorities. And just, the American KFOR doesn't have the largest sector, if we look at SW; I think the German –

Italian contingent has a larger sector than I do. For me to comment about standards it falls out around of my responsibility. And needs to go to the civilian folks.

**Xheladin Rexhepi – Zeri:**

Mr. General, the KFOR, mainly the MNB (E) for four years in this region have done a lot on developing of different projects for the civilian population especially America troops. How would be the further flow of those projects, will they continue, and how long will it be, while we know that the place was very much destroyed, and about the needs there is no need to comment about them? Thank you

**Beck:**

The projects are going to continue as they have been going on since I have been here. It has been no changes as far as my mission or my troops are concerned that would change any project that we are doing. In fact my troops are very enthusiastic about getting more projects going to be working with the people, and I know they are working with people back home to get clothing and toys and school supply sent here for the children and the communities. And my Civilian Affairs detachment works very hard with everybody to continue the building projects and the returns projects that are taking place in the area.

**Jovan Simic – DTV Shilovo**

On the introduction we see that the percentage of the criminal activities have decreased, I am interested to know why there is not the percentage of the resolving of these criminal activities. Is that maybe because of defeating purpose of the UNMIK and KPS especially about the criminal activities that are done to non-Albanians?

**Beck:**

Absolutely not, I did not mention figures but what we look what have happened over the last four years, 80% of all murders have been solved. And in the US we have only 60%, and the rate of violent crime is much lower here than in Western Europe and cities in US. Most of the crime is been disputes or criminal activity within the AO that don't represent the inter ethnic violence that you speak of. I think the KPS and UNMI-p have shown great tries in working to solve crimes over the last couple of years. Unfortunately, what we see in the press are only those that are not solved and we don't see what is solved. That was my point this morning in telling you the positive sides of what's happening on the KPS – UNMIK-p side, and the investigations are steel ongoing in Obiliq, in Gorazdevac, in Cernica, and there are continual investigations that have not stopped. So I think there is nothing to hide as far as the crime activities and the solving of crimes right now in Kosovo that UNMIK-p and KPS are out in front in working it.

**Agim Kajtazi – Radio Gjilani**

Mr. General, also in your opening statement said that you will continue to cooperate with the UNMIK- p and KPS, I am interested to know are you going to cooperate in the direction of exchanging the information that are connected with the incrimination of the

people, individuals on criminal activities, or the discovering of those activities will fight individually, which means KFOR on it's own and the UNMIK-p and KPS on their way, as happened earlier when KFOR also arrested people that were considered as dangerous for security?

**Beck:**

No, we definitely work together. We share information back and forth on everything that we do as far as criminals are concerned, we meet every two weeks and discuss the activities of the prior two weeks and then any new information that we may have for the future. This is because of the chance too not only sharing what we now but for them to also share with us the things that they know. So again the cooperation between us and the UNMIK-p is just a very good.

**Linda Karadaku – VOA:**

The new KFOR commander general Kamerhof, said that he wants kind of KFOR to be more flexible which means, he wants to have the power to move the troops from one sector to the other, and when we asked him which troops? He said (he mentioned) two of the nations in Kosovo, the Americans and the French. Is there any change in the US policy not to move the troops from this sector to other places to other areas in Kosovo and can we expect any kind of change in US policy concerning the place where the US troops can serve in Kosovo for a limited period of time or, in a world can we see any changes in a way KFOR has been operating until now.

**Beck:**

You won't see any changes in how do US soldiers are used while I am here under KFOR 5A, I can say that general Kamerhof is looking on how can he make better use of his assets, because he is looking for more flexibility to continue to provide a safe and secure environment throughout Kosovo. I have made some changes even in the MNB (E) as far as where US soldiers go and that now we have joint patrols with Greeks, the Ukrainians, and the Polish. So I don't think that you'll see any real change into your security here regardless where US troops are located. The US and I am sure, I don't speak for KFOR, I am sure that we remain committed for peace in Kosovo, and whatever they do it would be delivered prior due to process.

**Muhamet Halili – Radio Gjilan**

The general Kamerhof have announced possible reductions of the KFOR troops for the next year, about this policy of the reductions, how much will affected the MNB (E) comparing with other regions

**Beck:**

We are making no reductions now in the US sector, KFOR has been working on downsizing this year to get to the specific number that they wanted to get to before the end of year, but my reductions were made before I came in, so that when I came in here in July I was already at that reduced rate, and I could tell you that the troops that are now training to replace me in February are at the same number of troops that I have here now. So at least as far as next replacement for me there are no reductions of the troops.

**Nazim Haliti – Koha Ditore:**

General, do you have any report about a search done by Polish troops that are under your command at the restaurant EVROPA 92, what was the motive of that search that the Polish troops behaved very aggressive and they damaged the place.

**Beck:**

The Polish troops had an operation gone on Europe 92 and that they thought that there were some smuggling operations and prostitution operation going on there, and is all that operation they did about have about 15 if I remember the number correctly prostitutes that were arrested as result of that find. So if the Polish troops did anything that they should not have done was not brought to my attention and I can talk to the commander about that, but we are any times that we do this kind of operations never are intent to harm any one or to be discursions to anyone. This is the first time that I heard that is any kind of problem along that line.

**Bekim Kupina – Koha Ditore**

In a report released today by Kosovo media, of the international risk group, has been said that Kosovo and Albania are two places threatened by the terrorist activities of the “AL Qaeda”. What do you think general, is there such a threat?

**Beck:**

I have no indications of such a threat in MNB (E) area. I haven't seen any kind of reports to refer.

**Skender Idrizi – TV Festina Ferizaj**

Mr. General, lately you have done few visits to different public personalities, can you shortly tell us how you evaluate those visits.

**Beck:**

These were great visits for me, because I get to see the other side of what's happening out in the communities, from what my soldiers tell me and what the municipal presidents tell me. And I am happy to say that it is the same. My soldiers have constant contacts with the community, community leaders, and helping to ensure the safe and secure, to help ensure the returns process and to also help to ensure that the people are getting ready

for the winter, and my meetings with the leaders is to determine do I need to do something else or there is something different I could be doing to better help the communities, as well as to ensure that we have cooperation with municipal leaders for any of the operations that we are doing, and I have to tell you that with all of seven municipal leaders in MNB (E) we have a great working relationship and I thank them for that.

**Mimoza Zajmi – RTK**

General, if the status issue is resolved in 2005, is that the American troops will still stay in Kosovo.

**Beck:**

As you can see, I am on the ground with you; I am not involved in the talks that are going on as far as status is concerned. So I can also say I don't know, that's the other people do decide to determine what the status would be.

**Driton Ramadani – Radio Ferizaj**

Mr. General, since the beginning I think that this question has to do with politics, but I hope I will get an answer. Many politicians and military people that are for the moment in Kosovo have given their messages for fulfillment of the standards from the side of Kosovars. What would be your message for Kosovars for the fulfillment of the standards? Thanks you.

**Beck:**

My message is to continue to cooperate with everyone in international community to improve upon the present status of standards of living that they have now. As I said in the very beginning we have shown a lot of progress, and as we continue down that with the progress it gets closer and closer to the standards that are being set by UN.